<Article>Emperor-System Fascism : A Study of the Shift Process in Japanese Politics (Part II)

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by Munitions Minister Fritz Todt in April 1940 as part of German capitalism's "self-responsibility of industry" system, see Berenice A. Carroll, *Design For Total War: Arms and Economics in the Third Reich* (The Hague, Paris, Mouton, 1968), p. 222.

49. *Ibid.*, pp. 320–324.
50. On this point see Hikita Yasuyuki, "Fuashizumuka no dokusenkan tōsō to tennōsei kenryoku no dokujisei" [Conflicts Among the Monopolies and the Independence of the Emperor System Under Fascism] in *Rekishigaku kenkyū*, No. 451 (December 1977), pp. 44–50.
51. Inumaru Giichi, "Senzen Nihon no kokka kenryoku to tennōsei" [State Power and the Emperor System in Prewar Japan] in *Rekishi hyōron*, No. 245 (December 1970), pp. 18–19.
52. Nakamura Masanori, "Kindai tennōsei kokkaron", *Op. Cit.*, pp. 55–56.
53. Awaya Kentarō, "1936 '37 nen sōsenkyo ni tsuite" [On the 1936, 1937 General Elections] in *Nihonshi kenkyū*, No. 146 (October 1974), pp. 107–124. My discussion of these elections draws on Away's careful analysis and research results.
54. Ōki Yasue, "Kokutai meichō undō to gunbu fuashizumu" [The *Kokutai* Clarification Movement and Military-Clique Fascism] in *Kikan gendaishi*, No. 2 (May 1973), pp. 194–259; Nakajima Kenzō, *Shōwa jidai* [The Shōwa Era] (Tokyo, Iwanami Shinsho, 1957), pp. 89–90.
55. Away, *Op. Cit.*, P. 115. At the time of the 1935 prefectural assembly elections (as Awaya notes on pp. 108–109), out of 9,330,781 eligible voters, 6,823,238 actually voted while 2,507,543 abstained, for an average national abstention rate of 26.3 percent. This compared with an abstention rate of 19.4 percent in 1931 and 26.3 percent in 1927. The urban abstention rate was even higher: 38.2 percent in 1927, falling to 27.9 percent in 1931 and rising once again to 37.5 percent by 1935. Major cities like Osaka, Kyoto and Kobe had abstention rates of approximately 50 percent. Indeed, right up to 1937 all the big cities registered extraordinarily high abstention rates.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 123.
57. For a discussion of elections and voting under fascism ("the exceptional state form") see Nicos Poulantzas, *Fascism and Dictatorship: The Third International and the Problem of Fascism* (London, NLB, 1974), pp. 324–327; for voting in the liberal democratic state see Carole Pateman, *The Problem of Political Obligation: A Critical Analysis of Liberal Theory* (John Wiley & Sons, 1979), pp. 83–91.
58. Antonio Gramsci, "Observations on some Aspects of the Structure of Political Parties in Periods of Organic Crisis" in *The Modern Prince and Other Writings* (New York, International Publishers, 1968), p. 174.
59. Quoted in Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci and the State*, transl. by David Fernbach (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1980), p. 107.
60. Edward J. Drea, *The 1942 Japanese General Election: Political Mobilization in Wartime Japan* (Univ. of Kansas, Center for East Asian Studies, 1979), pp. 4–5.

35. See chart in Nakamura Masanori, "Kokka dokusen shihonshugi no seiritsu" [The Establishment of State Monopoly Capitalism] in *Taikei Nihon gendaishi 4, sensō to kokka dokusen shihonshugi* (Tokyo, Nihon Hyōronsha, 1979), pp. 16–17.
36. Jerome B. Cohen, *Japan's Economy in War and Reconstruction* (Univ. of Minesota Press, 19490, p. 8.
37. Koyama Hirotake, *Nihon gunji kōgyō no shiteki bunseki* [An Historical Analysis of Japanese Military Industry] (Tokyo, Ochanomizu Shobō, 1972) p. 264.
38. Nihon Ginkō tōkeikyoku, *Meiji ikō honpō shuyō keizai tōkei* [Hundred-Year Statistics of The Japanese Economy, prepared by The Bank of Japan, Statistics Department, 1966], p. 74.
39. Hitotsubashi Daigaku Keizai Kenkyūjo, ed., *Kaisetsu keizai tōkei* (Tokyo, Iwanami Shoten, 1953), p. 126.
40. Kajinishi Mitsuhaya, Katō Toshihiko, Ōshima Kiyoshi and Ōuchi Tsutomu, *Nihon shihonshugi no botsuraku III* [The Fall of Japanese Capitalism, Volume III] (Tokyo, Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1953, 1977), p. 828.
41. See *Nihon minshū no rekishi 9, sensō to minshū* [History of the Japanese People Volume 9, War and the People] (Tokyo, Sanseido, 1975), p. 177. For a more recent study see footnote 43.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 181. It would be wrong to conclude from this that, under conditions of war and mobilization, civilian resistance ceased altogether. On the contrary, as Awaya notes (Vol. 9, p. 181), worker frustration and dissatisfaction built up and vented itself in such forms as absenteeism, deliberate slacking on the job, and even outright sabotage of equipment and tools. The year 1939 saw 1,120 labor incidents involving the participation of 128,294 workers. Of this number, 358 cases involving 72,835 workers qualified as strike actions. The two largest of these strikes occurred in Okayama Prefecture at the Tama Shipbuilding Yard (where 6,500 workers staged a work slowdown) and in Kobe at the Kawasaki Heavy Industries (where 48,000 workers staged a similar work stoppage.) After 1940, stepped-up police interventions reduced the number of such incidents; but throughout the Pacific War years strike and sabotage incidents continued.
43. Yamazaki Hiroaki, "Senjika no sangyō kōzō to dokusen soshiki" [The Industrial Structure and Monopoly Organizations Under Wartime] in *Fuashizumuki no kokka to shakai 2, Senji Nihon keizai* (Tokyo, Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1979), p. 239.
44. Hadley, *Op. Cit.*, p. 57.
45. Yamazaki Hiroaki, *Op. Cit.*, p. 288.
46. *Ibid.*, especially pages 235 to 289; also John Roberts, *Mitsui: Three Centuries of Japanese Business* (New York, John Weatherhill, Inc., 1973), p. 353.
47. Shibagaki Kazuo, "Keizai shintaisei' to tōseikai" [The 'New Economic Order' and the Control Associations] in *Fuashizumuki no kokka to shakai 2, Senji Nihon keizai*, p. 325.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 323, 329. For the German "Control Associations", inaugurated

to keizai no ippan riron [The General Theory of Law and Economy] (Tokyo, Nihon Hyōronsha, 1974).

21. Nakamura Masanori and Suzuki Masayuki, "Kindai tennōsei kokka no kakuritsu" [The Establishment of the Modern Emperor-System State] in *Taikei Nihon kokkashi, 5, kindai II*, Op. Cit., pp. 60–69.
22. Jon Halliday, *A Political History of Japanese Capitalism* (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1975), p. 255, fn. 46.
23. Makoto Itō, *Value and Crisis: Essays on Marxian Economics in Japan* (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1980), p. 168, fn. 10; for a helpful short resume of the war's economic consequences for Japan see the article by Ogawa Masanori in Fujiwara Akira, Imai Seiichi, Ōe Shinobu, eds., *Kindai Nihonshi no kiso chishiki* [Basic Knowledge of Modern Japanese History] (Tokyo, Yūhikaku, 1972), pp. 242–243.
24. Toda Shintarō, *Tennōsei no keizaiteki kiso bunseki* [An Analysis of the Emperor System's Economic Foundations] (Tokyo, Sanichi Shobō, 1947), pp. 77–78. Also see the chart on the changing composition of the ruling class in Ōhashi Ryūken, ed., *Nihon no kaikyū kosei* [Japan's Class Composition] (Tokyo, Iwanami Shinsho 789, 1971), pp. 26–27.
25. Kano Masanao, *Nihon no rekishi 27, Taishō demokurashii* [History of Japan, Vol. 27, Taisho Democracy], pp. 387–388.
26. See Irvine H. Anderson, Jr., *The Standard-Vacuum Oil Company and United States East Asian Policy, 1933–1941* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1975), p. 74; Eleanor M. Hadley, *Antitrust in Japan* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1970), p. 365; and Nagahara Keiji, ed., *Nihon keizaishi* [An Economic History of Japan] (Tokyo, Yūhikaku Sōsho, 1970), pp. 283–288. The largest number of cartels in heavy industry, the chemical industries, textiles and the foodstuff industry were formed in 1930 and 1931.
27. Nagura Bunji, "Ryōtaisenkan Nihon tekkōgyō shiron" [A Study of the Japanese Iron and Steel Industry in the Interwar Period] *Rekishigaku kenkyū* [Journal of Historical Studies], No. 489 (February 1981), see especially pp. 1–9.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 14–17, 54.
29. See the incisive discussion of Japanese capitalism and Manchurian economic control in Sakamoto Masako, "Sensō to zaibatsu" [War and the Zaibatsu] in Nakamura Masanori, ed., *Taikei Nihon gendaishi 4, Sensō to kokka dokusen shihonshugi* (Tokyo, Nihon Hyoronsha, 1979), pp. 49–60.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 57ff.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 52–54.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
33. See Fujiwara Akira's report on "Fascism and War" in *Shinpojium Nihon rekishi 21, Fuashizumu to sensō*, Op. Cit., pp. 172–184. The discussion of Japan's economic advance into China on pages 196–200 is relevant here; also Kobayashi Hideo, "Nihon teikokushugi no Kahoku senryō seisaku – sono tenkai o chūshin ni" [On the Development of Japan's North China Occupation Policies] in *Nihonshi kenkyū*, No. 146 (October 1974), p. 5.
34. T.A. Bisson, *Japan in China* (New York, The MacMillan Company, 1938), pp. 128–129.

all aspects of the Peace Preservation Law system are introduced and analyzed in the special issue of *Kikan gendaishi*, No. 7 (June 1976) titled "Chian ijihō taisei – sono jitai to dotai" [The Peace Preservation Law System – Its Substance and Dynamics]. I have drawn on it for information in this and the next two paragraphs. Ebashi Takashi, in his article "Showaki no tokko keisatsu" [The Special Higher Police in the Showa Period], points out that the original mission of the "military thought police" was to root out within the armed forces left wing thought and activities. The year before, with the commencement of Japan's military intervention in Shantung, an anti-war movement had gotten underway, spearheaded by the "Communist Youth Kansai Regional Committee" and the "Suiheisha" (p. 80). The military high command's fear of antiwar propaganda spreading within the army was grounded in a real possibility. Another interesting discussion of the 1928 Peace Preservation Law revision can be found in Furuya (*Ibid.*, p. 29) and Okudaira Yasuhiro, "Tennōsei kokka no jinmin shihai" [Control of the People in the Imperial State], in Nakamura Masanori, ed., *Taikei Nihon kokka shi 5, Kindai 2* (Tokyo, Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1976), p. 324ff.

12. Okudaira, pp. 321–328.
13. Ebashi Takashi, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 78–79.
14. Watanabe Osamu, "Fuashizumuki no shūkyō tōsei – chian ijihō no shūkyō dantai e no hatsudō o megutte" [Religious Control in the Period of Fascism – The Application of the Peace Preservation Law Against Religious Groups], *Fuashizumuki no kokka to shakai 4, Senji Nihon no hōtaisei* (Tokyo, Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1979), pp. 115, 127.
15. Fujiwara Akira, Imai Seiichi, Tōyama Shigeki, et. al., *Shinpojium Nihon rekishi 21, Fuashizumu to sensō* [Fascism and War], (Tokyo, Gakuseisha, 1973), p. 262
16. Kisaka Junichiro, "Nihon fuashizumu kokkaron" [The Japanese Fascist State], *Taikei Nihon gendaishi 3, Nihon fuashizumu no kakuritsu to hōkai* (Tokyo, Nihon Hyōronsha, 1979), pp. 28–29.
17. For discussion of theories of the modern emperor system see Nakamura Masanori, "Kindai tennōsei kokkaron" [On the Modern Emperor System] in Nakamura Masanori, ed., *Taikei Nihon kokka shi 4, kindai 1* (Tokyo Tokyo Shuppankai, 1975), p. 62, footnote 13.
18. Ibid., p. 53.
19. Fujiwara Akira, "Senzen tennōsei ni okeru tennō no chii" [The Position of the Emperor in the Prewar Emperor System] in *Gendai to shisō*, No. 15 (March 1975), pp. 17–34.
20. The importance of the special class legislation passed in the late 1890s, parallel with the enactment of the 1898 Civil Code and 1899 Commercial Code, is discussed in Shibahara Takuji, "Kindai tennōseiron" [The Modern Emperor System], *Iwanami kōza Nihon rekishi 15, kindai 2* [Iwanami Lectures, Japanese History, Volume 15, The Modern Period II] (Tokyo, Iwanami Shoten, 1976), pp. 304–357; see especially part 3, pp. 324–335. Shibahara's study employs the econcepts of "class will" and "state will" as refined in Fujita Isamu's *Hō*

FOOTNOTES

My thanks to Joe Moore, John Dower, Ito Makoto and Jon Halliday for commenting helpfully on this essay.

1. See Hashikawa Bunzo's comments in *Shinpojium Nihon rekishi 21, Fuashizumu to sensō* [Symposium on Japanese History, Vol. 21, Fascism and War] (Tokyo, Gakuseisha, 1973), p. 77. A useful concept for treating these struggles is that of "negative power" as developed by Jadwiga Staniszkis in "Adaptational Superstructure: The Problem of Negative Self-Regulation" in Jerzy J. Wiatr (ed.), *Polish Essays in the Methodology of the Social Sciences*, Boston Studies Vol. XXIX (Dordrecht, Holland, D. Reidel Pub. Co., 1979), pp. 233–39.
2. Kato Shuichi, "Nichi Bei hoshuka no koto: mamoru dentō ni ōkinasa" [translated by the Japan Translation Center under the title "The New Right in Japan and America: Changing Spots and the Two Platoon System"] in *Asahi shimbun, yūkan* (July 7, 1980).

2a.

3. Alexander J. Groth, "The 'Isms' in Totalitarianism", in *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 58 (December, 1964).
4. See Eguchi Keiichi, "Sengo no 'Nihon fuashizumu' kenkyū" [Postwar Studies of Japanese Fascism] in *Rekishi kagaku taikei 12: 'Nihon fuashizumu' ron* (Tokyo, Azekura Shobo, 1977), pp. 288–316. Moriya Fumio's most recent book is *Tennōsei kenkyū* [Studies of the Emperor System] (Tokyo, Aoki Shoten, 1979).
5. For interesting argument on the need to obliterate sharp distinctions between questions of fact and questions of morality see Renford Bambrough, *Moral Scepticism and Moral Knowledge* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979); especially p. 72ff.
6. The foreign policies of the Saitō cabinet are discussed in James B. Crowley, *Japan's Quest For Autonomy, National Security and Foreign 1930–1938* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 178–186; its domestic policies in Awaya Kentaro, "Nihon fuashizumu no keisei to sensō junbi taisei no tokushitsu", Rekishigaku kenkyūkai, ed., *Sekaishi ninshiki to jinmin tōsōshi kenkyū no kadai* (Tokyo, Aoki Shoten, 1972), pp. 122–135.
7. Furuya Tetsuo, "Minshū dōin seisaku no keisei to tenkai" [The Formation and Development of Mass Mobilization Policy] in *Kikan gendaishi* [Quarterly Journal of Contemporary History], No. 6, Summer issue (August 1975), p. 48. The material in the following paragraph on the civilian air raid defense movement is drawn from Furuya's pathbreaking article.
8. Ibid., pp. 29–30.
9. Ibid., p. 49.
10. Ibid., pp. 27–28.
11. Herbert P. Bix, "Kawakami Hajime and the Organic Law of Japanese Fascism", *The Japan Interpreter*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Winter 1977), pp. 118–133. Nearly

* The civilian bureaucracy's growing political activism motivated largely by morbid fear of revolutionary movements abroad and their destabilizing effects at home on oppressed peasants, workers and intellectuals.

* The industrial and financial bourgeoisie's increasing organization of its class interests, and its participation in government in support of policies of intensified imperialism and economic autarchy. With the start of industrial rearmament and the building of the bloc economy, heavy industry had its profitability restored, light industry gained new opportunities on the Asian mainland, and the marriage of the zaibatsu monopolies with the forces of fascism was launched. The end result was a great transformation of Japanese society, guided "from above" and accelerating rapidly after 1937.

parties, advocated all along the goal of a new, single party for the entire nation. [60] Finally, in October 1940, the second Konoe cabinet formally established the "Imperial Rule Assistance Association", into which all the Japanese political parties were formally dissolved.

Yet even within this loose, contradictory structure, the parties, during the four years of the Pacific War, were able to reestablish their factions, maintain *jiban* [constituency] ties, and survive. Recent academic scholarship on the parties has made much of this fact in an effort to justify historically the postwar democracy, as well as the trend of permanent conservative party rule. The point, however, is not that the parties survived, but that, being outside the bounds of decision-making bearing on the war, they could not control the real power holders. Thus they did not further the quest for solutions to the nation's problems during the 30s, nor meet the domestic population's dire need for peace, nor develop strategies for checking the abuse of power by the bureaucracy. In fact, in most crucial respects, what the "people's representatives" did during the 30s and early 40s was of distinctly marginal importance. To find the roots of Japanese democracy, one must look to democratic struggles "from below" rather than to those conservative parties and politicians who originally prepared the ground for Japanese-style fascism and upon whom the postwar constitution of 1946 had, ultimately, to be forced.

g. Concluding Remarks

The preceeding discussion focused on the Japanese *state*, and more particularly on chains of events, economic forces and social groups contributing to its reorganization up to a certain point. Emperor-system fascism was a composite, transient and incomplete dictatorial form anchored in both the institutional legacies of the Maiji Restoration and in the institutional breaks with those legacies that occurred during the political struggles of the late twenties and thirties. It arose on the East Asian historical stage at an acute moment of the Great Depression, powered by many different motivations and circumstances, of which the following were most important:

* The army's desire for military modernization and expansion to meet an alleged "Soviet threat" and its advantageous position within the state for implementing foreign policy and spending strategies which, simultaneously, served the needs of capital.

of an attenuated "democratic" mechanism was thus highly efficacious for the rise of fascism.

In the second half of the thirties, as the crisis of Japanese state capitalism deepened, an overly intensive, rigid and literal application of the emperor principle – i.e. a genuine cult of the emperor – began undermining the very *status quo* it was intended to protect. It did so by abetting the quest for new, younger leaders to replace the old (Choshu-Satsuma based) ruling elites. This crisis, which parliamentary politics reflected, was not a "crisis of the State in all spheres"[58] as extraordinarily severe as that experienced earlier by either Italy or Germany. Indeed, it was not a hegemonic crisis at all in the sense of withdrawal of allegiance to the emperor by major segments of the bourgeoisie and proletariat. For the real rulers of bourgeois Japanese society still had sufficient ground on which to stand to reshape the national consciousness of emperor and *kokutai.* Having ample room for maneuver, they were able to justify their own continued, but more immediate, domination of politics and the economy in a reorganized power bloc of military and "reformist" bureaucratic groups, fused, just as in Europe, with the leaders of industrial and finance capital. In this process, "compromise" as a tactic of bourgeois politics was not replaced so much as it was subordinated to (what Gramsci termed) the long-term "project of achieving an organic unity of all the bourgeoisie's forces in a single political organism under the control of single centre . . . . . " [59]

The quest for such an organic unity of all political groups in Japanese society began in 1933 when Matsuoka Yōsuke, a keen admirer of Mussolini, launched an unsuccessful campaign for voluntary dissolution of the parties, in accordance with the fascist principle of *ikkoku ittai* [one nation, one body]. Yet not until the very end of the decade, with the promulgation of Konoe's bureaucratic plans for a new political order, did the major parties themselves abandon all resistance to fascism and begin taking the initiative in trying to realize their own disbandment. The Seiyūkai, the Diet's second largest party, was then divided into an orthodox camp (Hatoyama Ichirō in alliance with the Kuhara Fusanosuke faction) and a smaller "reform camp" dominated by new zaibatsu industrialist Nakajima Chikuhei, founder of the Nakajima Aircraft Corporation. In the larger Minseitō, Machida Chūji headed the majority faction and Nagai Ryutarō the smaller reform faction. In both major parties, the reform factions, together with the leaders of the Diet's splinter

rate was unprecedentedly high; the Seiyūkai and Minseitō (which made common cause against the Hayashi cabinet) both won, while the Social Mass Party scored a further gain of 37 seats and 9.1 percent of the total vote. Again, however, these results did not in themselves demonstrate any anti-fascist, anti-militarist inclination of the electorate. [56]

What then can be said in general about the purification campaigns and the electoral results of the mid-thirties? First, it must be kept in mind that even where the outcome is not largely predetermined, elections and participation in voting do not, *per se*, enable most people to realize their essential interests, let alone their real intentions. [57] Second, one can say that the Japanese male electorate (women were not allowed to vote) at least registered its uncertainty about the direction in which the country was headed and, in so doing, opened the way to the resignation, on May 31, 1937, of the cabinet of General Hayashi. However, third, the bureaucracy gave the election results the contents that it wished. Thus the Home Ministry read them as a demonstration of the limitations of its successive purification campaigns as mechanisms for securing electoral control. In that respect, as Awaya Kentarō has argued, the elections spurred the bureaucracy to new levels of organizational activity, out of which emerged new measures and new machinery for reconciling fascism with the preservation of the outward constitutional form of the Meiji state structure. But the individual Japanese voter in the expanded electorate of 1936 and 1937 was utterly unable to control the country's leadership cliques. Given the choices available to him, regardless of how he cast his vote, the results of the two general elections would not have been able to prevent the drastic shift to the right of the old ruling elites which was then underway.

Up to 1937 the fascization of the state structure had corresponded to the gradual suppression of the Diet's and the party's limited representative functions. The parties fought their battles in the Diet, campaigned for electoral votes and preserved the image of an intact (but utterly spurious) pluralism. Real power resided with the groups around the emperor (who were simultaneously members of the bureaucracy), the *Tōsei-ha* military officers in whom the emperor reposed his trust, and the zaibatsu. Within this constellation of forces the parties and the Diet survive because they acted as constraints on certain forms of radicalism, while also doubling as apparatuses of the imperial state through which new renovationist forces could enter politics. The preservation in Japan

the signing of the Anti-Comintern Pact with Nazi Germany in November 1936, and the entrance of intellectuals into the councils of government, symbolized by the formation of the *Shōwa kenkyūkai* [Showa Research Association], a brain trust for Konoe Fumimaro, the most popular political figure in Japan after the emperor. Finally, in June 1937, Konoe formed his first cabinet and public calm returned momentarily to the nation.

Such was the broad political context in which the electoral activity of the mid-1930s must be situated. In the years 1935 to 1937, where politics at the national level was concerned, most Japanese voters may have continued to believe that party government and electoral politics were both quite beyond restitution. But they also felt just as strongly that outright military dictatorship was also not a feasible alternative either. All efforts by the Home Ministry to weaken the two major parties, undermine their private political campaigning, and curb party corruption and voter abstentions, came to nought against this basic feeling of the electorate. The first purification campaign had only a slight impact on curbing party evils and reducing the voter abstention rate, despite the allegedly reduced amount of money available to the major parties for vote purchasing.

The second purification campaign, geared to the February 1936 general election to the Diet was equally unsuccessful in getting the electorate to choose good, "pure" Dietmen who would reform the Diet in accordance with the Army's wishes. The Seiyūkai, running on a platfrom attacking both Professor Minobe's "organ theory of the throne" and the Minseitō's advocacy of "national unity", and advocating support for the Okada cabinet, lost the February 20th election and became the number two party, while the Minseitō rose to first place. The 19th Diet election was also notable for the increase in strength registered by the Social Mass Party [*Shakai taishūtō*], which won 18 Diet seats while other "proletarian parties" won 4 for a total of 22 seats.[55] But this socialist vote was by no means indicative of anti-militarist, anti-fascist sentiment on the electorate's part. For the dominant wing of the Social Mass Party was pro-government, pro-military, and even less inclined to resist the fascist current than the major conservative parties.

The 20th general election, held in April 1937 – the last before the "Imperial Assistance Election" of April 20, 1942 – exhibited an even greater degree of direct police and military control over campaigning and speech-making than the 1936 election. Yet the voter abstention

toral purification campaigns and mid-thirties elections, let us try to situate them historically. The prefectural as well as the general elections of the mid-thirties were intimately connected with the establishment of a fascist political regime and occurred in a specific stage of reorganization of ruling class hegemony. Between early 1934 and early 1936 a political stalemate prevailed at the national level in Japan, while at the local level, within villages, self-cultivating peasants and small landlords espousing pro-military *nōhonshugi* [lit., agriculture is the base-ism] were rising into positions of leadership, forming part of the mass social base for emperor-system fascism. (Its other "base" was, of course, the bureaucracy.) Simultaneously, radical right-wing groups were reorganizing and joining in the fanatical "Movement for the Clarification of the National Polity". This movement, which the emperor allegedly balked at, began in February 1935 with the Minobe Incident in the House of Peers:an attack on retired professor Minobe Tatsukichi's interpretation of the constitution, which, it was charged, made the emperor's sanctity and absolute nature conditional. The Seiyūkai, seeking to overthrow the incumbent cabinet, exploited but was unable to control it. Rather, from its inception, *Kōdō-ha* officers led the *kokutai* clarification movement through their control over the Military Reservists Associations.[54] By the end of 1935, the *kokutai* clarification movement had come to engulf the entire army and had kindled anew the public's sense of unease. In an attempt to curb the army's politicalization, rival senior *Tōsei-ha* officers then dismissed the representative *Kōdō-ha* figure, Inspector-General of the Army, Mazaki Jinzaburo. This action touched off a series of events which led, finally, to the February 26, 1936 coup attempt, in which twenty young *Kōdō-ha* officers, leading some 1,454 "righteous army" troops, paralyzed the capital for four days. The unsuccessful February 26 coup was precipitated by the *Kōdō-ha* officers' assessment of the international situation confronting Japan in 1935—early 1936, and by their reading of the general election results of the previous week, in which the Seiyūkai lost seats and the Social Mass Party made notable gains. Essentially, it was a counter-revolutionary action designed to hasten the campaign for national reconstruction under army leadership.

It was also a pivotal event marking a speed-up in the fascist reorganization of Japan's state structure. In the wake of the "righteous army's" coup attempt, the *Tōsei-ha* completed its purge of *Kōdō-ha* officers and of petty-bourgeois radicalism within army ranks. Thereupon followed

mation from demobilizing agents in the twenties into mobilizing agents of the subordinate classes in the thirties. Also worth paying attention to is the subordination of the electoral process itself to the larger process of spiritual and defense mobilization.

At the start of the 1930s a violent phase of class struggle in Japan coincided with a heightening of national liberation struggles in China and the onset of the Great Depression. In these circumstances, the very idea of political parties and of parliamentarism as such came to be discredited in the eyes of many Japanese. Under depression conditions, in fact, most sectors of the population welcomed the army's dramatic victories on the foreign front and its bold initiatives at home in breaking the characteristic deadlock of Japanese corrupt-politics-as-usual. Having already eroded their own legitimacy through their pursuit of unreasonably partisan policies during the twenties, the major parties now perceived it to be in their interests to whip up war fever over Manchuria in tandem with the private fascist organizations to which many of the leading politicians had close ties. Thereafter they abetted the movement, led by the local Reservists Associations, to "Clarify the National Polity" by discrediting the organ theory of the constitution propounded by Professor Minobe. In 1934–35, while this *kokutai meichō* movement was at its height and Japanese public life was being subjected to Shinto rituals and beliefs, the bureaucracy decided to advance a new level of national mobilization by undertaking an "election purification campaign."

The professed aims of the first campaign – in which party officials themselves expressed approval and support – were to purify the political world, curb the rising trend of voter abstentions and reduce campaign corruption. [53] In May, four months before the start of the Fall 1935 prefectural assembly elections, the Home Ministry ordered "election purification committees" formed in every *do* (circuit), *fu* (metropolitan district) and *ken* (prefecture). To furnish coordination for them at the national level, it then established an "Election Purification Central League." And with that the government entered the business of electroral campaigning: by press, radio and movies; by mobilizing Shinto shrines; by encouraging people to offer prayers to the dieties of heaven and earth, and to swear oaths before the gods; lastly, by mobilizing people to participate in politics at the lowest administrative level: through the *buraki* and *chonaikai* organizations.

Before drawing any conclusions as to the significance of these elec-

members of his own party. Hara Kei's cabinet of 1918–21 was the first of such "party cabinets" but its establishment reflected the will of the Genrō and the emperor's advisers, not that of the Diet. Thereafter, Japan's bourgeois-landlord parties formed a succession of cabinets which functioned in behalf of zaibatsu and landlord interests. Inorder to stabilize the power of the ruling bloc during the twenties, the parties fulfilled four distinct, classic roles: (a) they coopted middle class strata that could not be recruited effectively by repressive means; (b) they helped to suppress and demobilize peasant and working class struggles against the system of discrimination in the countryside, as well as struggles for a fairer distribution of weath and a measure of democracy, both of which challenged the system's stability; (c) they worked to turn class resentments and social crisis outward by whipping up support for war and for imperialist expansion; and (d) they tried to conciliate and contain disputes between dominant groups of the ruling bloc. [52]

However, the revision by emergency imperial edict in 1928 of the Peace Preservation Law (passed by the party cabinet of Katō Komei during the 50th Diet session in 1925) created new mechanisms for beating back the bourgeois-democratic and revolutionary movements of the 1920s. At the same time they allowed some party functions to be shifted onto the judicial and police apparatuses of the sate, thereby hastening a change in the form of the Meiji regime to one that would soon have both absolutist and fascist features. When the general election of 1928 came, opening the door to mass politics through implementation of the 1925 Manhood Suffrage Law, the established parties had no choice but to increase their reliance on zaibatsu money (which seems to have become slightly harder to obtain) and to continue maneuvering (chiefly at the expense of officialdom) for more bureaucratic power and in search of votes from a broader segment of society.

When in 1932 the era of so called "party cabinets" gave way to the era of "national unity cabinets", the established parties continued to function as special appendages of the state. But unlike the twenties, when they worked to frustrate the political and economic demands of newly mobilized peasants and workers, now they were compelled to politicize those same subordinate classes in an effort to regain lost legitimacy, while at the same time forging closer ties with the military. The parties need to be assessed, therefore, from the angle of their transfor-

Now, to complete our discussion, let us go back and have a look at the political party component of emperor-system fascism. What role did the parties play in fostering and sustaining that complex process of harsh and pervasive political repression, mass conformism and group mobilization which accompanied industry's precocious advances from the late 20s to the early 40s?

f. Parties and Electoral Politics in the Thirties

The Diet and the established parties were similar to other constituent elements of the emperor system formed in late Meiji in the sense that oracular sovereignty as much as their legitimating principle and protective shield as it was of other, more powerful, organs of the state.[51] But unlike those others, the political parties began their rise to power within a Diet that met for less than three months each year and that was constitutionally permitted to superintend only the most limited powers of control over the budget and the right to offer advice and consent on legislative matters. The Diet also included – on a par of authority with its "democratic" element, the House of Representatives – an imperially appointed House of Peers, expressly contrived to block the popular will. Moreover, like the cabinet, it was subject to the controlling influence of two other bodies: the Privy Council and the Genrō, later Jushin, who made recommendations to the emperor on the appointment of the prime minister. No wonder that many contemporaries and later historians regarded such an institution as a mere constitutional "outer skin" of an absolutist state structure, which was exactly what its architects intended it to be.

Although the Diet's activities were not lacking in historical or political meaning, what needs to be remarked here is that it occupied, and was never able to break out of, an extremely inferior structural position within the emperor system. Further, unlike the ministries, the established parties lacked the flexibility, leadership and authority needed for conciliating the divergent interests of the dominant classes and strata. Japan's political parties were not traversing a path toward two-party government during the 1920s and so they could not, and did not, diverge from such a path during the 1930s. Let us look more closely then at the prewar conservative parties from which today's ruling LDP is directly descended.

Starting with the Rice Riots of 1918 the Genrō allowed cabinets to be chosen by the head of a political party, who could include in it

would have a single, supreme boss, did not work well in the context of Japan's late-developing industrial structure and distinctive corporate practices. [48]

Yet some, like Shibagaki Kazuo, have argued that the triumph of the ideological principles on which the control associations were predicated, and not their failure of implementation, was of lasting significance. The businessmen's control associations subscribed to the ideology of free competition, the priority of public welfare, and the self-regulation of industry by leaders chosen from within. Such principles they couched in the terminology of the "New Economic Order", though what they meant, in effect, was a regime under which finance and monopoly capital strengthened their dominance in the economy, while the state agreed to confine itself only to general system-maintenance functions. With the establishment of the control associations, and the transfer to them of broad administrative and public authority, the zaibatsu secured predominance for their ideological principles, while advancing a step further their own emancipation from excessive bureaucratic control. The control associations thus represented the last attempt of late developing Japanese capitalism to reform itself from within. [49]

Still, against this argument for regarding the control associations as an index of finance capital's hegemony, on the ideological plane at least, one must set the fact that little transfer of authority from government ministries to control associations actually took place.
In fact, as Hikita Yasuyuki noted, control associations were excluded from whole industries which were the nucleus of military production, such as aircraft and weapons plants.[50]

* * * * * * *

The rapid advance of Japanese monopoly capital during the early thirties exacerbated contradictions within the ruling bloc and greatly complicated the bureaucracy's task of regulating the gains of the economy while insuring, at the same time, that the zaibatsu subserved the cause of war. But by exploiting relative differences in the power positions of "old" and "new" zaibatsu, by utilizing the lever of state-controlled industries, and by skillfully fostering consensus under the emperor — who was himself ever active behind the scenes in a higher coordinating capacity — by doing all of these things, the ministries and the military were able to maintain their overall hegemony and continue the war until the emperor finally made the decision to surrender.

Industrial Promotion Bank, increased their degree of capital concentration from 14.4 percent before the war to 19.5 percent by the early 1960s. [45] A dialectic of high growth and periodic recessions in the twenty years subsequent to 1960 then further increased, far beyond what these figures suggest, the degree of monopoly concentration and centralization of capital in the Japanese economy.

The concentration trend in industry and finance during the period of the zaibatsu/military alliance may thus appear weak in comparison to later phases of concentration. Nevertheless, it paved the way for what was to follow after the war. One of its lasting effects was the decline in the ability of traditional zaibatsu "holding companies" to finance, and thereby control, subsidiary firms and combines within their orbit, and the corresponding rise of big bank control over industries and trading firms within each zaibatsu group. This type of wartime "zaibatsu dissolution" clearly anticipated the postwar reorganization of zaibatsu combines around core banks rather than family-owned holding companies. [46]

Another lasting influence of the period of the "New Economic Order", based on Nazi-German notions of a total-war economy, was the company-controlled employee association or union, of which there were many kinds and into which the majority of Japanese workers were compelled to enroll. But perhaps the most important economic legacy of this period arose on the ideological plane, in the principles of the so called control associations. Control associations (*tōsei kai*) in vital industries were established originally on the basis of the September 1941 "Major Industries Group Ordinance" (*Jūyō sangyō dantai rei*). [47] Within a year, twelve control associations had been formed in nine different divisions of industry. As the war dragged on towards defeat, industries, as well as banks in other sectors, established similar horizontally-organized "self-control" associations. These bodies, though numbering eventually in the thousands, never developed on schedule or in accordance with their original conception. From the outset, jurisdictional conflicts beset them — conflicts either with the old zaibatsu organized as vertically-integrated empires spanning many industries, or with bureaucrats who resented delegating their carefully guarded powers to "private" bodies of businessmen chosen from within each industry rather than appointed from without by the bureaucracy. Also, the leader principle [*führerprinzip*], by which each subdivision of industry

percent in 1938, 8 percent in 1939 and nearly none in 1940.[42] After that date, the new economic order required the dissolution of the labor unions and the introduction of conscripted Japanese labor and the forced labor of Koreans. The general conditions of labor, like the standard of living of the Japanese people as a whole, then deteriorated to such an extent that the bureaucracy, in pursuit of the war effort, was obliged to intervene directly against landlords by offering tenant cultivators increased incentives.

1937–1945

It was precisely in this context of human misery and impoverishment for the majority that the zaibatsu rose to a position of unprecedented power in the post-1937 (or full wartime) economy. At the very end of their first period of expansion (1931–36), the 14 largest zaibatsu combines controlled slightly less than one quarter of the paid-in capital of all Japanese companies and about 30 percent of the paid-in corporate capital in heavy industry.[43] Thereafter, three kinds of monopolistic concentration occurred: concentration of capital in six large zaibatsu banks, of capital in the hands of a small number of integrated zaibatsu combines, and of production in leading zaibatsu enterprises in each industrial sector. By 1945 the big four zaibatsu (Mitsui, Mitsubishi, Sumitomo and Yasuda) controlled 32.4 percent of all investment in heavy industry and nearly 50 percent of all investment in finance. The increased position of the remaining eleven zaibatsu combines was minor in comparison to the gains made by these four giants during the four years of the Pacific War. In her study of zaibatsu concentration Hadley remarks that "Comparing the proportion of investment outside Japan by the Big Four among the 9 in 1941 to their position among the 10 in 1946, we find that the Big Four went from 18 percent to 80 percent. In such circumstances it is hard indeed to imagine that there could have been any fundamental antagonism between the big, older combines and the military".[44] Her judgement, however, as we shall see in a moment, tends to overestimate the unity of the zaibatsu-military embrace, while slighting its internal contradictions, which became more pronounced with time.

Interestingly, the period stradding the war, from the late 1930s to 1960, saw a significant increase in the capital concentration of Mitsui, Mitsubishi, Sumitomo and Yasuda, which went from 10.4 percent in 1937 to 13.6 percent in 1960. Similarly, the seven largest industrial groups, which include the big four plus the Sanwa Bank, Dai Ichi Kangyo Bank and

and profits, while the biggest increases were registered by the largest firms in each category: Japan Steel, Sumitomo Metals, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and Hitachi Manufacturing (a Nissan affiliate).[37]

The contrast between this profit-taking and the movement of workers' real wages in private manufacturing industry is worth nothing. According to Bank of Japan statistics (taking 1926 as 100), the real cash earnings of male workers in private factories increased slightly between 1931 and 1937, going from 92.0 to 98.0, while during the same period wages of female workers declined annually from 77.4 to 71.2.[38] However, if these statistics seem to suggest that imperialist expansion in China was helping to mitigate the conditions of wage labor for some, older statistics prepared by the Hitotsubashi University Economics Institute show that daily per capital real wages in manufacturing industry (1934–36 = 100) actually declined from 107 to 101 between 1931 and 1937.[39] Another Japanese source also shows the index of real wages in private manufacturing industry (1934–36 = 100) falling between 1931 and 1937 from 109.1 to 99.0.[40] With the outbreak of the China War, however, workers real wages gradually began to be standardized at an extremely low level in all sectors of the economy, thus reducing wage differentials per industry across the board. The consolidation process of fascism in Japan, as elsewhere, was also accompanied by chronic inflation. Over the whole period from 1934–36 to 1945, nominal wage-rates trippled, going from 100 in 1934–36 to 289.9 in 1945. But the actual cost of living in Japan during that same period rose seven-fold to 705 percent. As a result, in the final phase of the Japanese war economy – the years of the Pacific War – real wages fell to what was in effect a starvation level, far below anything experienced by the Germans at any time under the Hitler regime. In fact, already before Pearl Harbor, in the first four years of the China War alone, the index of real wages fell from 100 in 1934–36 to 81.9 in 1940, a difference of 18.1 points.[41]

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that, with the start of all-out war in China, the state was forced to intervene in the labor market to legally control (freeze) wages, tie workers to their jobs, and dissolve the trade unions. After reaching a prewar peak of 7.9 percent of the work force in 1931, the percentage of workers enrolled in labor unions fell by 1940 to 0.1 percent. In that same period, police intervention in the arbitration of labor disputes rose steadily while union participation declined: going from 38 percent of the total number of such disputes in 1937 to 13

in furthering capitalist accumulation on a newly expanded basis. Business support for new processes of political mobilization at home and for reform of the state with a view to further concentrating (but also, at certain levels, diffusing) power, then followed as a corollary to the new direction in foreign policy. When at the end of the decade, Chinese peasant resistance frustrated the army's efforts to build a stable political superstructure for consolidating the new economic order, Japan's rulers opted for a widening of the struggle in and beyond China.

Costs and Benefits

Let us see next just who reaped the benefits and who paid the costs of this zaibatsu/military alliance, after which we shall consider some of the long-term effects of the "15 years war" on the structure of Japanese capitalism. For the vast majority of the Japanese people – not to mention their millions of Asian victims – extremely harmful effects followed from the process of conversion of Japanese private industry into a command-control economy geared to waging total war. Conversely, right up until Japanese imperialism was in its death throes, the giant zaibatsu found that same process highly profitable, as even a fleeting glimpse of company profits and workers wages during the thirties attests.

In the manufacturing sector, surveys by the Mitsubishi Economic Research Institute of about 200 representative firms showed that the ratio of profit to total used capital increased from 1.9 in early 1931 to 7.4 in late 1937. Similar surveys of 10 to 15 companies in the mining sector showed the ratio of profit to total used capital rising steeply from 1.8 to 8.9 during the same period: early 1931 to late 1937.[37] A Western authority on the Japanese war economy, J.B. Cohen, suggested similarly high percentage figures for the first half of the thirties, nothing that "The index of corporate profits (1929 = 100) rose from 51 in 1930 to 157 in 1936. For a representative sample of companies in manufacturing and mining . . . net profits as a percentage of capital rose from 5.2 percent in 1930 to 16.1 percent in 1936."[36] The biggest earners, of course, were in production for war and by the second half of 1936 earnings of from 20 to 30 percent profit on paid-up capital were being registered by thirty-eight civilian war contractors for the army and navy, at the very time when profits from export industries were starting to decline. Thereafter, from late 1937 to late 1941, private companies in the areas of iron and steel, shipbuilding, non-ferrous metals and machine manufacturing doubled and, in some cases, tripled their paid-in capital

modities in general, especially with the facilities afforded by East Hopei and out-of-work silver smugglers, was relatively easy. [34]

Clearly, long before the Marco Polo Bridge Incident accelerated, rather than began, the Japanese economic plunder of China, the puppet "autonomous regime in Eastern Hopei" was facilitating a contraband trade in Japanese goods, which also paved the way for the older zaibatsu combines to begin participating directly in the building of the continental empire.

Between 1931 and 1936 overseas expansion was the common response of zaibatsu and military leaders alike to the global breakdown of the capitalist accumulation process itself. (At the most general level, responsibility for that generalized breakdown must be assigned first to the enormous structural imbalances in the distribution of wealth, income and industrial capacity that had built up ever since the end of the 19th century, but especially since World War I, in the different national units of the world capitalist system. A second causal factor was the imbalances between demand for commodities, including capital and labor power, and the capacity of different national capitals to meet it.) Japan's private monopoly corporations had always been tied structurally to state capital and dependent on state aid in numerous forms. When the breakdown occurred, they were striving to catch up with the advanced Western economies by shifting their base to the heavy and chemical industries, and, by raising tariff barriers, keep out competitive foreign imports. Such a shift presupposed a continuation and extension of the resources-imperialism that had been practiced at China's expense throughout the 1920s. It also presupposed a continuation of the fusion which had been underway at least since the mid-twenties between the private monopolies, government-operated industries, and the bureaucracy.

In this context, the functional significance of the Great Depression and the Manchurian Incident was that, coming on top of one another, they advanced both trends. The leaders of government and business responded by quickly reorganizing trade, currency and financial arrangement along the same lines as their stronger Western trading rivals, thereby forging an exclusive trading bloc in Japan's own East Asian periphery. By lending their active support to the overriding goal of Japanese foreign policy during the early thirties, which was to smash the Western-imposed balance of power in East Asia and replace it with a new political and economic order dominated by Japan, Japan's business leaders succeeded

throughout the army's advance into North China, nearly all the giant prestigious monopoly firms worked together as a team. In late 1934, detailed planning by the army got underway for the economic separation of North China from the rest of China, and the former's integration into a Japan-Manchukuo-China economic bloc. Two years later in 1936, Japan's direct economic advance into North China began, spear-headed by the *Mantetsu*, its newly formed subsidiary Hsing-Chung or the China Development Company, that organization's own numerous subsidiaries, the Yokohama Specie Bank, the Okura Gumi, which had long had coal and iron mining rights at Penhsihu, and the general trading firms of the Mitsui and Mitsubishi zaibatsu, which had similar rights at Fushun and other places in China and Korea.

Meanwhile, in the two years from 1934 to 1936, China's highly competitive textile industry in Shanghai, Tsingtao, Tientsin and other North China cities was being wrecked by Japanese concession-hunters and fortune-seekers representing medium and small capital. In Tsingtao, for example, Japanese textile capital already owned nearly seventy percent of the textile looms even before the start of the China War; two years later, in 1939, it owned nearly ninety percent. The significance of Japan's coercive monopolization of the North China trade before 1937 can hardly be overestimated. The total amount of import and export trade going through the six North China ports of Chinwangtao, Tientsin, Lungkou, Tsingtao, Weihaiwei and Chefoo, just in the period 1933 to 1936, was equal to or exceeded China's total foreign trade. [33]

On the eve of the China War, T.A. Bisson wrote this description of what was happening in North China:

> The center of the stage, in the spring of 1936, had been taken by a specially fashioned technique of Japanese penetration – smuggling operations organized on a mass scale . . . . . From the beginning, the demilitarized zone had been the seat of smuggling enterprises of various kinds. Through this area had flowed the precious stocks of silver coin and bullion in a stream that was at flood in the middle of 1935. An extensive traffic in narcotic drugs fostered by Japanese nationals, especially Koreans, had developed since 1933 in the railway towns of the zone. Opium and other more deadly narcotic drugs from Manchukuo, entering via East Hopei territory, had spread widely through all the North China provinces . . . . . The transition to protection of a smuggling traffic which embraced Japanese com-

railway, mining and textile capital and developing Chinese national capital, which had been struggling throughout the twenties to restrict the Japanese economic advance. Organizationally, however, the fighting in Manchuria grew out of a carefully planned conspiracy within the army and then unfolded as an actual war of colonial pacification. Naturally, at the time, the Japanese government, with the mass media's eager cooperation, obfuscated the real causes of the war. It justified Japan's actions in the name of anticommunism and resistance to the Soviet threat, while making China appear as a country standing in need of chastisement, improvement and general uplifting by Japan. (Nations seldom go to war for anything but beneficent purposes.) Kwantung Army planners of the "incident" and their military superiors in Tokyo, however, sought common goals. They wanted to mobilize the home population to counter the agricultural depression and, at the same time, reform the state under military leadership. In pursuit of these goals they exploited the deep-rooted animus, widespread throughout Japanese society, against the zaibatsu. To justify the sacrifices they were asking the Japanese people to bear, the army promised repeatedly to prevent the zaibatsu from aggrandizing the fruits of victory, which someday would be a gift for everyone. [30]

The "old" zaibatsu (Mitsui, Mitsubishi, Sumitomo), aware of these purely domestic reasons for their exclusion from Machuria, were not displeased to see the South Manchuria Railway Company (*Mantetsu*) and the government assume all the risks in building the infrastructure for their own future direct investments in the puppet state of "Manchukuo." And they were also at one with the army about restricting direct investments in "Manchukuo" so that its industries would not compete with domestic Japanese industry. As Sakamoto Masako's study has shown, both army, zaibatsu, and major business federations were also agreed on the basic goal of seeking to further the economic development of Japan rather than the autonomous economic development of Manchuria. [31]

Up to 1936 the *Mantetsu* monopolized most heavy industrialization in Manchuria: indeed, 60 percent of all Japanese capital invested in Northeast China took the form of purchases of *Mantetsu* stock and risk-free debentures. [32] During that same period, 1931–36, the older zaibatsu were also actively furthering coal and iron development in Manchuria and securing stabilized profits from *Mantetsu* industrial activities. And

Although developed under conditions created by military initiative, the new relationship between the zaibatsu and the military was grounded in the mutually shared aim of building a self-sustaining and self-sufficient bloc economy, which would be capable of expanding Japanese power in Asia. Here we shall divide its development into two stages: 1931 to 1936 and 1937 to 1945. If we emphasize the first stage, then the start of the China War in mid-1937 seems to acquire a certain necessity from the viewpoint of economic development.

The Zaibatsu and the Military, 1931–6

Certainly the early thirties saw Japan's economic structure reshaped by (a) movements of cartellization and rationalization in industry and (b) an enormous expansion of productive forces, especially the heavy and chemical industries. In this period of building-up an arms economy, the objective requirements of Japanese industry were met by purchases from the West of machinery and scrap metal and massive imports from colonial Asia of industrial raw materials, particularly coal and low phospherous pig iron (essential for weapons manufacture). Such imports, in turn, depended partly on the rapid occupation of new territories in China. Economically, the nearly 12 percent increase in Japanese exports to the Kwantung Leased Territory, occurring between 1931 and 1936, meant that industry and banking in Japan gained from the advance of the Japanese army in Manchuria an overseas outlet for industrial manufactures and idle capital. Army aggression in these years also made possible the large-scale plunder and expropriation of foreign-owned (mostly Chinese) businesses, raw materials, natural resources and labor power. For the declining Japanese textile industry this meant the elimination of a competitor and the aquisition of a new civilian market in China. Without such assistance and plunder, a relatively backward Japanese capitalism would have been extremely hard pressed at that stage to accumulate, rapidly, sufficient capital to build a quasi-war economy centered on large zaibatsu enterprises. [29]

Yet the exclusion of zaibatsu capital from the virgin land of Manchukuo was the very premise on which the Kwantung Army publicly based its planning – a fact often cited in textbook accounts to support the thesis that the zaibatsu opposed the new policy of direct, forceful action. Such a view is unnecessarily one-sided and naive. One step toward a better understanding of the zaibatsu/military relationship is to recognize that the Manchurian Incident represented a clash between Japanese

mill capacity, steel manufacturers could not meet foreign competition even in the domestic market. In fact, as late as 1929, only 68 percent of all Japanese plants producing steel plate and sheet were in operation: foreign competition had shut down the remainder. With foreign imports of iron and steel, especially from China, Korea and British India, acting as the main determinant of prices in the Japanese home market, domestic makers were unable to set monopoly prices or secure monopoly profits. [27]

In these circumstances, zaibatsu-connected iron and steel firms formed defensive cartels to resist foreign imports and also pushed the government to enact other relief measures to foster the Japanese steel industry. At the same time, the private firms began to seek greater co-operation with the government-operated companies engaged in the production of iron and steel. Yet even these measures did not suffice, by themselves, to overcome the chronic stagnation in the late developing iron and steel industry and turn it into a base for zaibatsu capital accumulation. For that to happen the state itself had to take the initiative by (a) creating greatly increased military demand for iron and steel, (b) overcoming the problem of insecurity of foreign ore supplies, and (c) integrating the industry. With the establishment, in April 1933, of the Japan Iron and Steel Works (Nittetsu) – a giant state capital trust – a fusion was achieved, finally, between private zaibatsu capital and the largest of the government-operated steel works. [28]

Clearly, one cannot contemplate the successes of the monopoly bourgeoisie during the 1930s without being struck by how close they meshed with the rise of fascism and militarism. Having penetrated the bereaucracy, the leaders of industry and finance succeeded in securing, with strong conservative party support, governmental aid in numerous forms, while the needs of poor tenants, minute independent landlowners and the urban poor were being callously disregarded. The acute depression subsequent to 1929 thus set the stage for the large-scale zaibatsu organizations to begin their full-scale political and economic rise. After the shooting of Prime Minister Hamaguchi (November 1930) and the start of the Manchurian Incident (September 1931) – both closely coincident with the sudden collapse of agricultural prices and the free trade system based on gold – Japan's industrial and financial leaders began to by-pass the political parties in favor of a relationship with the militarists that was far more dynamic, mutually profitable and institutionalized than anything yet seen.

crats, often acting on the recommendations of these captains of industry and finance, pioneered new forms of state intervention in the economy, such as the Major Industries Control Law and the Industrial Society Law, both enacted in 1931. Japan, of course, was in the midst of the Great Depression when these new laws to promote cartels were made. But they did not represent any shift in the underlying general direction in which the economy was headed. Even industrial protectionism had its roots in the mid-twenties. The June 1932 upward tariff revision, for example, marked a further unfolding of an industrial protection policy which really began in 1926, with the passage of a tariff-rate revision law. And protectionist policies in trade and industry went hand in hand with various long-sought schemes for rationalization and standardization of production. In a sense, then, the object of economic policy at the start of the thirties was to register the transformation that had occurred earlier, over the previous decade, in the structure of the Japanese economy. For capitalists, this meant state aid in securing the home market exclusively for Japanese industry, while also helping industry to meet intensified competition in world markets and improve the competitiveness of Japanese exports.[26] More generally, it meant a greater role for the state in managing industry's break out from an international status quo which subserved Western economic interests at Japan's expense. The following example of how fusion was finally achieved between private and government manufacturers of iron and steel illustrates many of these trends.

Iron and Steel

Changes in the iron and steel sector of Japanese industry between the two world wars, the object of a recent study by Nagura Bunji, show concretely why the intensified imperialism of the early 1930s advanced the reform of Japanese capitalism in exactly the direction many capitalists had long wished to move. Japan's privately-owned iron and steel firms had achieved a certain degree of domestic self sufficiency by the end of World War I. Nevertheless, throughout the twenties, they confronted numerous problems, particularly the monopolization of coking coal and iron ore supply-sources by state capital (in the form of the Yawata Iron and Steel Complex and the South Manchurian Railway Company) and a bifurcated physical structure within which pig iron and steel products were produced separately by different firms. In addition, domestic steel-mill production capacity always exceeded total demand for various kinds of steel materials. Obliged to operate at greatly reduced

long-term tendency for the balance of class power to change adversely for many strata of landlords could be seen in several distinct ways. First, both small-sized landlords (owning 1–5 *cho*) and big landlords (owning 50 *cho* and over) began to abandon agriculture altogether, precipitating a partial (i.e. geographically uneven) dissolution and restructuring of the landlord system. In 1924 there were 4,950 landlords owning over 50 *cho* for a total land area of 405,232 *cho*. Thereafter their numbers decreased until, by 1940, there were only 2,941 large-sized landlords or slightly more than had existed in 1908 when landlords were in the ascendant within the bloc. [24]

A second index of the destabilization of the ruling bloc particulary at the level of its social base, was the rise of the tenant movement led by middle and upper-echelon tenants demanding rent reductions and eventually claiming permanent rights to the land. In addition, over the course of the twenties, but especially after the 1927 financial crisis, landlord-controlled local banking declined while local, prefectural banks were forced to subordinate themselves to large urban banks under zaibatsu control.

The same decades that witnessed this undermining of the landlord system by the tenant and labor movements also saw the rise of private monopoly power and a corresponding relative decline in the weight of state capital in the economy. As private zaibatsu corporations slowly gained in power, the class consciousness of capitalists increased, as evidenced by the new forms of industrial organization which gave big business a stronger voice at the national political level. In effect, the Japanese bourgeoisie became a fully constituted class in the decade after World War I and the organizational forms which had once sufficed to articulate its interests changed accordingly. Starting with the *Nippon kōgyo kurabu* [Japan Industrial Club] in 1917, national class organizations and industry-wide professional associations emerged. Included among the former were the powerful *Nippon keizai renmei* [Japan Economic Federation] in 1922, and the *Zenkoku sangyō dantai* [National Federation of Industrialists] in 1931. [25]

To further supplement these private business organizations and to coordinate the activities of state and economy, zaibatsu executives then strengthened their influence in the House of Peers and began entering government directly, serving in extra-ministerial bureaus and commissions, charged with promoting industrial cartellization. Simultaneously, bureau-

(1900), through which not only capitalists but large land owners (those owning 50 *cho* and over) were able to make their wishes known to the bureaucracy.[21] Thus, despite its many internal conflicts, the ruling bloc was exceptionally well integrated at the top and its system of power relations relatively impervious to even the most needed changes. Furthermore, private zaibatsu interests interlocked with state interests at all times, while state capital played an enormously important role in the development of Japanese capitalism down to and including World War I.

In his *Political History of Japanese Capitalism*, Jon Halliday remarks that "In discssing the issue of military-business aggressivity it should be remembered that the central role in Japan's expansion was played by the state which provided the budgets and credits which permitted both military adventures and capitalist exploitation and looting."[22] For the interwar period it is necessary to build on this observation by investigating the concrete ways in which the connections were made between the private zaibatsu monopolies and the state, and how those connections changed over time.

The precocious developments of Japanese capitalism during World War I offer an angle from which to begin such an inquiry. Between 1914 and 1919 production in mining and manufacturing increased over four fold, going from 100 to 487 according to the Nagoya Kosho index.[23] Since most of the increase occurred in small and medium sized factories employing less than fifty workers, the economy emerged from the war in a highly unbalanced state. In fact, despite the advances in heavy industrialization, the position of the textile industry remained pivotal, indicating that Japan itself remained a light industrialized country. Lastly, increased industrialization had caused Japan's dependency on imported raw materials to deepen, thereby precipitating a strengthening of control over its colonies to compensate for a corresponding subordination to Western imperialism.

Class Structure in the 20s and 30s

Taken together, both the gains as well as the costs of Japan's World War I industrialization paved the way for changes that occurred in the class structure during the 1920s and '30s. Bloc unity and internal cohesion at the national level was undermined by the strengthening of the capitalist class and the weakening of different strata of landlords. Simultaneously, at the local level, the slow but steady absorption of the surplus agricultural population was underming the local, landlord-dominated structure of the villages. Particularly during the 1920s, the

there were various types) were able to expand production, strengthen their control over the nation's economic life and, in the process, build up a more integrated and centralized system of diverse economic dependencies. Even a brief investigation of their role in the rise and partial consolidation of emperor-system fascism can serve to bring into focus a rough picture of the structure of Japanese society in the 1920s and '30s. It is helpful to begin, however, by noting two features of the core group of the Japanese bourgeoisie, one common to all capitalist classes, the other specific to countries with late developing, weak bourgeoisies.

First was its inherent diversity of purposes. Vis-à-vis the key agricultural sector as well as one another, Japanese capitalists seldom had, even before World War I, consistently unified economic interests. Rather, conflicting interests and schisms beset capitalists and big landlords through all stages of development.

Yet, secondly, these conflicts were usually mediated effectively by the state bureaucracy, largely because Japan's small industrial bourgeoisie had been conditioned culturally, almost from birth, to seek and receive state aid and guidance in the conduct of its economic affairs. Initially, such aid took the form of a system of laws, erected in the 1890s, which helped to reproduce and mediate the aims of the classes comprising the ruling bloc.[20] But the zaibatsu were also charter members of the ruling bloc and had residual power in the core political institutions: namely, the House of Peers and the Imperial Household, both of which acted directly on their behalf. The Peers did so because the former court nobles and daimyo (i.e. the upper stratum of the pre-Meiji hereditary aristocracy) no sooner became newly entitled under the Peerage Act of 1884 than they became a new financial aristocracy with investments in mining, shipping and the sphere of distribution – all of which were dominated by zaibatsu corporations. Also deeply tied in by investments to the main lines of zaibatsu activity was the agency known as the Imperial Household, administrative arm of the emperor's vast properties. Like the Peers, but only more so, it functioned over the long run as a champion and defender of zaibatsu interests. Moreover, the Imperial Household also locked into the landlord system through the emperor's huge holdings of farm, forest and mountain land. Lastly, there existed numerous chambers of commerce, agricultural associations, the *Yurakukai* (1900), and the Higher Chamber of Agriculture, Commerce and Manufacturing [Nōshōkō kōtō kaigi] (1896), plus political parties in the Diet, such as the Seiyūkai

fanaticism) pervaded the entire bureaucracy.[18] Furthermore, all state organs of the modern emperor system, without exception, were arranged systematically and structured internally in such a way as to express, vis-à-vis the people, the absolutist essence conferred upon them individually by the emperor, who was himself, in theory, an absolute being. Japanese absolutism, if defined narrowly as the officials' consciousness of exercising unlimited power of control over people, also drew on the specifically samurai tradition (which was really of Confucian provenance) of *kanson minpi* ("revere officials and despise the people"). As E.H. Norman stressed, the attitude of *kanson minpi* was integral to the spirit d'corps of the various organs of the state system.

A recent study by Fujiwara Akira offerred an explanation of what, in practice, this absolutism actually meant during the early Showa period. The monarch, in whom resided the leadership power of the state, acted in behalf of the ascendant capitalist class, which was then in alliance with big landlords. Depending on circumstances, however, he shifted his trust to different power organs, upon which he had conferred an absolutist nature. When warfare grew more technical after World War I and maintenance of military control over the colonies became more difficult, the emperor was obliged to trust his top military commanders more than others. They in turn began to exercise preponderant power in the state.[19] But this appearance of exercising preponderant power was partly illusory. Never was the military able to successfully defy the emperor's will; nor were military commanders ever able to strengthen their authority beyond the will of the emperor. Neither, until the very end of the war, could they bring the zaibatsu to heel by defying the zaibatsu in their own sphere of influence. Thus in peacetime as in wartime Japan, the ultimate nerve-center of decision-making never ceased to be "civilian" in coloration. All of which brings us next to the classic problem of how to explicate the relationship that developed between the zaibatsu and the forces of fascism.

e. Fascism and Late Developing Capitalism

Certainly common needs and aims constituted the basis on which the zaibatsu (the most significant, large-scale units of private capital) became integrated with the bureaucracy and the military. By colluding with the forces of fascism in the thirties, by tying up with state-sponsored and operated war industries, the private zaibatsu combines (of which

making was unnecessary. One solution to this problem of the emperor's political role is to examine concrete instances of the way in which the prewar state embarked upon wars or made alliances, or instances in which the emperor personally managed grave domestic crises, such as the dismissal of Prime Minister Tanaka Giichi for his handling of the Chang Tso-lin assassination and the suppression of the February 26, 1936 military uprising. Another is to look closely at the theory of Japanese sovereignty itself and the way in which the emperor institution protected the individual occupying the throne. The latter approach especially will show that, within the type of absolutism the emperor represented, much more was implied than a merely formal claim to sovereignty; it also involved a ubiquitous civil faith, which subordinated the individual to the state and its mission, and an ideology obstructive of rational political discussion.

Consider the prewar theory of sovereignty. Japanese loyalist thought strengthened the emperor's claim to absolute sovereignty by drawing on the myth of the divine origins of the imperial line and adding to it, in the preamble to the 1889 constitution, a genuinely unique element of blood. The latter differentiates the theory of Japanese absolutism from its European counterpart: "The rights of sovereignty of the State, We have inherited from our Ancestors, and We shall bequeath them to our descendants." European conceptions of divine monarchy had assumed that supreme rights of state sovereignty were bestowed originally by God and, thereafter, the monarch acted as God's representative on earth, wielding his powers in accordance with natural and divine law. In contrast, as Nakamura Masanori pointed out, this Japanese version of constitutional absolutism reflected a stifling indigenous heritage of despotism. Ultimately, it based the emperor's right to govern later generations on an appeal to his own blood ancestors, i.e. "from out Ancestors", and thereby justified, as his own (dynastic and eternal) possession, the supreme decision-making power so wielded. [17]

More specifically, the Japanese version of absolutism elevated and protected the emperor by making him absolute vis-à-vis all positive law, in the sense that all the organs of state – but especially the army, police and courts – belonged personally to him. In Nakamura's words, there were "no apparatuses of the state that did not conform with his will nor any able to resist his will". In effect, the emperor was freed from all legal restrictions, and, thanks to him, the spirit of absolutism (and

Emperor-System Fascism:

A Study of the Shift Process in Japanese Politics (Part II)

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d. The Problem of the Emperor

Constitutionally, the emperor's formidable political powers suffered no diminution over time but remained the same – essentially absolute in nature – from 1889 until the early Showa period down to the surrender on August 15, 1945. The question of when, exactly, the relative autonomy of both emperor and emperor system began to be undermined is part of what the early postwar controversy over Japanese fascism was largely about. Because the Meiji Constitution (articles 3 and 4) defined the emperor as "sacred and absolute", "the head of the Empire", the veritable embodiment of real sovereignty, and because it also designated him (article 11) "the supreme commander of the army and navy", his real decision-making power and actual role or function were inseparable, both in practice as in theory. Politically, the emperor furnished the necessary coordination to make the system work and in times of deadlock or crisis there was no way it could work unless he involved himself, to some degree, in actual decision-making. Such a moment occurred on May 15, 1932 when one group of young naval officers assassinated Prime Minister Inukai at his official residence while another group bombed the Seiyūkai headquarters. At that crucial juncture, Emperor Hirohito and the Genrō made the actual break with the previous technique of rule, by the simple expedient of by-passing the parties and appointing a retired admiral, Saitō Makoto, to head a cabinet of "national unity."

The trick comes when one puts into the picture the element of will, thereby implying a level of power which did not necessarily connote an active or continuing imperial role in the decision-making process. The oligarchs who contrived the prewar state deliberately arranged to have the will to war or peace emanate from only one man – the emperor – so that, from one angle, his sovereignty amounted merely to the power to declare the state will; for that participation in actual decision-